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LOCKE LIDDELL & SAPP LLP 600 TRAVIS 3400 CHASE TOWER HOUSTON, TX 77002-3095			PATEL, DHIRUBHAI R	
			ART UNIT	PAPER NUMBER
			2831	

DATE MAILED: 05/06/2004

Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

**Office Action Summary**

Application No.

09/764,572

Applicant(s)

ACKERMAN ET AL.

Examiner

DHIRU R PATEL

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-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address --  
Period for Reply

A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE 3 MONTH(S) FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.

- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- If the period for reply specified above is less than thirty (30) days, a reply within the statutory minimum of thirty (30) days will be considered timely.
- If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133). Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).

**Status**

- 1) ☒ Responsive to communication(s) filed on 30 March 2004.  
2a) ☒ This action is **FINAL**. 2b) ☐ This action is non-final.  
3) ☐ Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11, 453 O.G. 213.

**Disposition of Claims**

- 4) ☒ Claim(s) 23-27, 37, 38 and 40 is/are pending in the application.  
4a) Of the above claim(s) \_\_\_\_\_ is/are withdrawn from consideration.  
5) ☐ Claim(s) \_\_\_\_\_ is/are allowed.  
6) ☒ Claim(s) 23-27, 37, 38 and 40 is/are rejected.  
7) ☐ Claim(s) \_\_\_\_\_ is/are objected to.  
8) ☐ Claim(s) \_\_\_\_\_ are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.

**Application Papers**

- 9) ☐ The specification is objected to by the Examiner.  
10) ☐ The drawing(s) filed on \_\_\_\_\_ is/are: a) ☐ accepted or b) ☐ objected to by the Examiner.  
Applicant may not request that any objection to the drawing(s) be held in abeyance. See 37 CFR 1.85(a).  
Replacement drawing sheet(s) including the correction is required if the drawing(s) is objected to. See 37 CFR 1.121(d).  
11) ☐ The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner. Note the attached Office Action or form PTO-152.

**Priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119**

- 12) ☐ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).  
a) ☐ All b) ☐ Some \* c) ☐ None of:  
1. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.  
2. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. \_\_\_\_\_.  
3. ☐ Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).  
\* See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received.

**Attachment(s)**

- 1) ☒ Notice of References Cited (PTO-892)  
2) ☐ Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948)  
3) ☐ Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO-1449 or PTO/SB/08)  
Paper No(s)/Mail Date \_\_\_\_\_.  
4) ☐ Interview Summary (PTO-413)  
Paper No(s)/Mail Date. \_\_\_\_\_.  
5) ☐ Notice of Informal Patent Application (PTO-152)  
6) ☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_.

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### **Part III DETAILED ACTION**

1. The finality of the final rejection mailed on 01/13/2004 is hereby withdrawn to clarify the rejections to claims 23-29 and 35-45. This office action replaces previously office action sent on 01/13/04 with a new statutory period. Any inconvenience to the Applicant is regretted.

2. The evidence submitted is insufficient to establish a conception of the invention prior to the effective date of the 6,521,834 reference. While conception is the mental part of the inventive act, it must be capable of proof, such as by demonstrative evidence or by a complete disclosure to another. Conception is more than a vague idea of how to solve a problem. The requisite means themselves and their interaction must also be comprehended. See *Mergenthaler v. Scudder*, 1897 C.D. 724, 81 O.G. 1417 (D.C. Cir. 1897). The applicant has failed to provide the following :

For claim 23: a method of assisting a compromised barrier comprising: placing the fire retardant gasket between a faceplate and an electrical box, coupling the faceplate to the box, and at least partially reestablishing a fire rating of the barrier.

For claim 37, a method of assisting a compromised barrier comprising: installing into a fire rated barrier an electrical box, introducing into the electrical box a fire retardant gasket, and covering the electrical box with a faceplate .

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It is noted that a declaration does not provide the claimed subject matter for claims 23 and 37. Exhibit A for E -mail and discussed about "gasket" for plastic cover plates, but did not provide any information about a gasket comprising fire retardant material of a fire resistant insulative material containing mineral wool, ceramic fiber or intumescent graphite as claimed in claim 23 and 37, Exhibit B discussed about an electrical box insert only, but did not provide placing the fire retardant gasket between a faceplate and an electrical box for claim 23. Exhibit C discussed about metal size only, and Exhibit D discussed about a plate, a box, hole and cold face, but did not provide claimed subject matter for claims 23 and 37, and Exhibit E testing of 1.5mm blazeseal electrical plate covers only. Exhibits A through E are insufficient to establish a conception of the invention prior to the effective date of the 6,521,834 reference.

***Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 112***

The following is a quotation of the second paragraph of 35 U.S.C. 112:

The specification shall conclude with one or more claims particularly pointing out and distinctly claiming the subject matter which the applicant regards as his invention.

3. Claims 23-27 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph, as being indefinite for failing to particularly point out and distinctly claim the subject matter which applicant regards as the invention.

In claim 23 line 8, " at least partially reestablishing a fire rating of the barrier"

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is confusing and it is not clear because what is a time limit or periods of time for at least partially reestablishing a fire rating of the barrier?.

***Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 102***

The following is a quotation of the appropriate paragraphs of 35 U.S.C.102 that form the basis for the rejections under this section made in this Office action:

(e) the invention was described in (1) an application for patent, published under section 122(b), by another filed in the United States before the invention by the applicant for patent or (2) a patent granted on an application for patent by another filed in the United States before the invention by the applicant for patent, except that an international application filed under the treaty defined in section 351(a) shall have the effects for purposes of this subsection of an application filed in the United States only if the international application designated the United States and was published under Article 21(2) of such treaty in the English language.

4. Claims 23-27, 37-38, 40 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(e) as being anticipated by Dykhoff et al (6,521,834).

Assembly of the device of Dykhoff et al comprises a method steps of:

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Regarding claim 23, a method of assisting a compromised barrier 4 (a wall, see fig 1, abstract lines 1-11, column 1 lines 5-35, column 2 lines 40-46, column 3 lines 40-50, column 4 lines 30-40, column 14 lines 45-55) comprising:

a) providing a gasket 8 (a fire stopping mat, see fig 1, column 2 lines 10-64, column 3 lines 40-50, column 4 lines 30-45) comprising fire retardant material of a fire resistant insulative material (i.e. a binder, see column 7 lines 57-67, column 9 lines 23-30, column 11 lines 24-67, column 12 lines 1- 24) having a ceramic fiber material ( see abstract lines 11-14, column 2 lines 30-40, column 2 lines 54-65, and see column 14 lines 61-63);

b) placing the fire retardant gasket 8 between a faceplate 6 and an electrical box 10 (see fig 1, column 2 lines 10-25, column 3 lines 40-45, see column 4 lines 30-53, column 14 lines 38-55) adapted to be introduced into the barrier 4 ( see fig 1, column 3 lines 20-50, column 4 lines 30-60, column 14 lines 45-52);

c) coupling the faceplate 6 to the box 10 ( see fig 1 , column 3 lines 5-45, column 4 lines 30-54, column 15 lines 1-5) ;

and d) at least partially reestablishing a fire rating of the barrier (see column 1 lines 15-35, column 2 lines 20-26, column 3 lines 5-50, column 4 lines 54-62, column 14 lines 45-52).

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Regarding claim 24 , the assembly of Dykhoff et al disclose all of the claimed features as shown above, including further comprising coupling the gasket 8 in situ between the faceplate 6 and the box 10 (see fig1, column 3 lines 30-50, column 4 lines 30-62, column 16 lines 10-16 ).

Regarding claim 25 , the assembly of Dykhoff et al disclose all of the claimed features as shown above, including providing the gasket 8 comprises forming the gasket 8 as a separate element (see fig 1, column 3 lines 40-50, column 4 lines 35-40, column 16 lines 10-16) prior to placing the gasket 8 between the faceplate 6 and the box 10 (see fig1, column 4 lines 30-50 and column 16 lines 10-16).

Regarding claim 26 , the assembly of Dykhoff et al disclose all of the claimed features as shown above, including further comprising forming the gasket 8 on one surface of the faceplate 6 prior to coupling the faceplate 6 to the box 10 (see column 3 lines 40-50, column 4 lines 54-62, column 16 lines 10-16).

Regarding claim 27, the assembly of Dykhoff et al disclose all of the claimed features as shown above, including the gasket is being formed by establishing a coating of the fire retardant material onto the faceplate 6 (see column 2 lines 29-35, column 3 lines 40-45, column 15 lines 1-14).

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Assembly of the device of Dykhoff et al comprises a method steps of:

Regarding claim 37, a method of assisting a compromised barrier ( a wall, see fig 1, abstract lines 1-11, column 1 lines 5-35, column 2 lines 40-46, column 3 lines 40-50, column 4 lines 30-40, column 14 lines 45-55) comprising:

a) installing into a fire rated barrier 4 (a wall, see fig 1, abstract lines 1-11, column 1 lines 5-12, column 2 lines 40-46, column 3 lines 40-50, column 4 lines 30-40, column 14 lines 45-55) an electrical box 10 (see fig 1, column 2 lines 10-25, column 3 lines 40-45, column 4 lines 40-45, column 14 lines 38-55) , the electrical box 10 compromising the fire resistance of the fire rated barrier (see column 1 lines 5-40, column 2 lines 1-28, column 3 lines 40-50, column 4 lines 30-45),

b) introducing into the electrical box 10 a fire retardant gasket 8 (a fire stopping mat, see fig 1, column 2 lines 10-64, column 3 lines 40-50, column 4 lines 30-45) of a fire resistant insulative material (i.e. a binder, see column 7 lines 57-67, column 9 lines 20-30, column 11 lines 24-67, column 12 lines 1- 24) having a ceramic fiber material( see abstract lines 11-14, column 2 lines 34-40, column 2 lines 54-65, and column 14 lines 61-63) ; and covering the electrical box 10 with a faceplate 6 ( see fig 1, column 2 lines 1-10, column 3 lines 40-45, column 4 lines 30-54, column 14 lines 40-55).



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Regarding claim 38, the assembly of Dykhoff et al disclose all of the claimed features as shown above, including the fire retardant gasket 8 being adhered to the faceplate 6 prior to covering the electrical box 10 with the faceplate 6 (see column 2 lines 1-10, column 3 lines 40-50, column 14 lines 40-50, column 16 lines 10-18).

Regarding claim 40, the assembly of Dykhoff et al disclose all of the claimed features as shown above, including the fire retardant gasket 8 being introduced to the electrical box 10 without removing the electrical box 10 from the fire resistant barrier (see fig 1, column 2 lines 10-40, column 3 lines 30-50).

***Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 103***

The following is a quotation of 35 U.S.C. 103 (a) which forms the basis for all obviousness rejections set forth in this Office action:

(a) A patent may not be obtained though the invention is not identically disclosed or described as set forth in section 102 of this title, if the differences between the subject matter sought to be patented and the prior art are such that the subject matter as a whole would have been obvious at the time the invention was made to a person having ordinary skill in the art to which said subject matter pertains. Patentability shall not be negated by the manner in which the invention was made.

This application currently names joint inventors. In considering patentability of the claims under 35 U.S.C. 103(a), the examiner presumes that the subject matter of the various claims was commonly owned at the time any inventions covered therein were made absent any evidence to the contrary. Applicant is advised of the obligation under 37 CFR 1.56 to point out the inventor and invention dates of each claim that was not commonly owned at the time a later invention was made in order for the examiner to consider the applicability of 35 U.S.C. 103(c) and potential 35 U.S.C. 102(f) or (g) prior art under 35 U.S.C. 103(a).

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5. Claims 23-27 and 37-38,40 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103 (a) as being unpatentable over Tricca (4,293,173) in view of Landin (6,153,674).

Assembly of the device of Tricca comprises the method steps of:

Regarding claim 23, a method of assisting a compromised barrier 18 (a wall, see fig 3, abstract lines 1-8, column 1 lines 10-15, column 1 lines 60-68, column 2 lines 1-2, column 3 lines 50-60) comprising:

- a) providing a gasket 14 (an insulating plate, see fig 3, column 2 lines 50-60, column 3 lines 20-38, column 4 lines 9-15) comprising fire retardant material (Armaflex®), see column 3 lines 20-38, please note that Tricca disclosed that this material has good fire retardant properties, see column 3 lines 20-30);
- b) placing the fire retardant gasket 14 between a faceplate 21 and an electrical box 23 (see fig 3, column 2 lines 8-33, and column 2 lines 50-65, column 3 lines 57-65) adapted to be introduced into the barrier 18 ( see figs 2-3, column 1 lines 10-15, column 2 lines 8-33, column 3 lines 39-63, column 4 lines 10-15);
- c) coupling the faceplate 21 to the box 23 ( see column 2 lines 10-15, column 2 lines 50-65, column 3 lines 55-66, column 4 lines 65-68) ; and
- d) at least partially reestablishing a fire rating of the barrier (see column 1 lines 65-68, column 2 lines 1-3, column 3 lines 53-56, column 4 lines 9-15),

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but fails to disclose the fire retardant material of a fire resistant insulative material containing mineral wool, ceramic fiber or intumescent graphite. Landin teaches the use of a fire barrier material being especially useful in providing fire protection for electrical system (see column 1 lines 55-60) with a fire retardant material having a fire resistant insulative material (i.e. binders, see column 3 lines 29-67, column 4 lines 1-38 ) containing mineral wool (see column 1 lines 10-15, column 2 lines 8-18, column 3 line 1) , a ceramic fiber (see column 1 lines 10-15, column 11 lines 45-55) or intumescent graphite (see column 1 lines 10-15, column 7 lines 15-30), in order to reduce or eliminate the passage of smoke and flames through openings between walls and floors (see column 1 lines 10-15) as well as absorb a significant magnitude of heat and prevent transfer of heat from a fire across the barrier for a significant period of time and continue to delay fire spread passively and to seal any opening which could admit fire, heat, or corrosive gasses (see column 10 lines 50-62 ). It is well known in the electrical art to use a fire retardant material of a fire resistant insulative material containing mineral wool, ceramic fiber or intumescent graphite as evidence by Landin. It would have been obvious to one having ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to replace the fire retardant material of the gasket of the assembly of Tricca with a fire resistant

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insulative material containing mineral wool , ceramic fiber, or intumescent graphite as taught by Landin in order to reduce or eliminate the passage of smoke and flames through openings between walls and floors as well as absorb a significant magnitude of heat and prevent transfer of heat from a fire across the barrier for a significant period of time and continue to delay fire spread passively and to seal any opening which could admit fire, heat, or corrosive gasses , and please note that Tricca disclosed that the large faceplate insulation backing plate may be constructed of any suitable thermal insulating material, see column 3 lines 34-40 of Tricca, and it has been held to be within the general skill of a worker in the art to select a known material on the basis of its suitability for the intended use as a matter of obvious design choice. In re Leshin, 125 USPQ 416.

Regarding claim 24 , the modified assembly of Tricca disclose all of the claimed features as shown above, including coupling the gasket 14 (see fig 3 of Tricca) in situ between the faceplate 21 and the box 23 (see fig3, column 3 lines 50-65 of Tricca).

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Regarding claim 25 , the modified assembly of Tricca disclose all of the claimed features as shown above, including the gasket 14 comprises forming the gasket 14 as a separate element (see fig 3, column 2 lines 25-60, column 3 lines 25-30 of Tricca) prior to placing the gasket 14 between the faceplate 21 and the box 23 (see fig 3, column 3 lines 25-60 of Tricca).

Regarding claim 26 , the modified assembly of Tricca disclose all of the claimed features as shown above, including forming the gasket 14 on one surface of the faceplate 21 prior to coupling the faceplate 21 to the box 23 (see column 2 lines 8-33, column 3 lines 25-55 of Tricca).

Regarding claim 27, the modified assembly of Tricca disclose all of the claimed features as shown above, including the gasket 14 is being formed by establishing a coating of the fire retardant material onto the faceplate 21 (see column 2 lines 15-25, column 3 lines 20-38 of Tricca).

Tricca disclose:

Assembly of the device of Tricca comprises the method steps of:

Regarding claim 37, a method for assisting a compromised barrier comprising:

a) installing into a fire rated barrier 18 ( a wall, see fig 3, abstract lines 1-8, column 1 lines 60-68, column 2 lines 1-15, column 3 lines 50-60 ) an electrical box 23 ( see fig 3, column 2 lines 8-33, column 2 lines 50-65, column 3 lines 55-

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66) , the electrical box 23 compromising the fire resistance of the fire rated barrier (see column 2 lines 8-33, column 3 lines 57-68, column 4 lines 9-20), b) introducing into the electrical box 23 a fire retardant gasket 14 ( insulating plate , see fig 3, column 2 lines 50-60, column 3 lines 20-38, please note that Tricca disclosed that the large faceplate insulation backing plate may be constructed of any suitable thermal insulating material, see column 3 lines 34-40 of Tricca); and covering the electrical box 23 with a faceplate 21 ( see fig 3, column 2 lines 50-65 , column 3 lines 55-60), but fails to disclose the fire retardant material of a fire resistant insulative material containing mineral wool, ceramic fiber or intumescent graphite.

Landin teaches the use of a fire barrier material being especially useful in providing fire protection for electrical system (see column 1 lines 55-60) with a fire retardant material having a fire resistant insulative material (i.e. binders, see column 3 lines 29-67, column 4 lines 1-38) containing mineral wool (see column 1 lines 10-15, column 2 lines 8-18, column 3 line 1) , a ceramic fiber (see column 1 lines 10-15, column 11 lines 45-55) or intumescent graphite (see column 1 lines 10-15, column 7 lines 15-30), in order to reduce or eliminate the passage of smoke and flames through openings

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between walls and floors (see column 1 lines 10-15 ) as well as absorb a significant magnitude of heat and prevent transfer of heat from a fire across the barrier for a significant period of time and continue to delay fire spread passively and to seal any opening which could admit fire, heat, or corrosive gasses ( see column 10 lines 50-62 ). It is well known in the electrical art to use a fire retardant material of a fire resistant insulative material containing mineral wool, ceramic fiber or intumescent graphite as evidenced by Landin. It would have been obvious to one having ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to replace the fire retardant material of the gasket of the assembly of Tricca with a fire resistant insulative material containing mineral wool , ceramic fiber, or intumescent graphite as taught by Landin in order to reduce or eliminate the passage of smoke and flames through openings between walls and floors as well as absorb a significant magnitude of heat and prevent transfer of heat from a fire across the barrier for a significant period of time and continue to delay fire spread passively and to seal any opening which could admit fire, heat, or corrosive gasses , and please note that Tricca disclosed that the large faceplate insulation backing plate may be constructed of any suitable thermal insulating material, see column 3 lines 34-40 of Tricca, and it has been held to be within the general skill of a worker in the art to select

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a known material on the basis of its suitability for the intended use as a matter of obvious design choice. In re Leshin, 125 USPQ 416.

Regarding claim 38, the modified assembly of Tricca disclose all of the claimed features as shown above, including the fire retardant gasket being adhered to the faceplate prior to covering the electrical box with the faceplate (see column 2 lines 8-33, column 3 lines 25-65 of Tricca).

Regarding claim 40, the modified assembly of Tricca disclose all of the claimed features as shown above, including the fire retardant gasket being introduced to the electrical box without removing the electrical box from the fire resistant barrier (see fig 3, column 2 lines 8-40, column 3 lines 1-65, column 4 lines 1-33 of Tricca).



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**Conclusion**

**6. Applicant's amendment necessitated the new ground(s) of rejection presented in this Office action. Accordingly, THIS ACTION IS MADE FINAL. See MPEP § 706.07(a). Applicant is reminded of the extension of time policy as set forth in 37 CFR 1.136(a).**

**A shortened statutory period for reply to this final action is set to expire THREE MONTHS from the mailing date of this action. In the event a first reply is filed within TWO MONTHS of the mailing date of this final action and the advisory action is not mailed until after the end of the THREE-MONTH shortened statutory period, then the shortened statutory period will expire on the date the advisory action is mailed, and any extension fee pursuant to 37 CFR 1.136(a) will be calculated from the mailing date of the advisory action. In no event, however, will the statutory period for reply expire later than SIX MONTHS from the date of this final action.**

**Response to Arguments**

7. Applicant's arguments with respect to claims 23-27, 37-38, 40 have been considered but are moot in view of the new ground(s) of rejection. With respect to applicant's arguments, the recitation " Applicants' claims are directed to a method of assisting compromised barriers" has been considered and determined that it doesn't constitute method assisting limitations because it merely recites the purpose of a process or the intended use of a structure, and where the body of the claim does not depend on the preamble for completeness but, instead, the process steps or structural limitations are able to stand alone. See *In re Hirao*, 535 F .2d 67, 190 USPQ 15 (CCPA 1976) and *Kropa v. Robie*, 187 F .2d 150, 152, 88 USPQ 478, 481 (CCPA 1951).

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Further, the DECLARATION under 37 CFR 1.132 filed dated 3/30/04 is insufficient to overcome the rejection of claims 23-27, 37-38, 40 based upon anticipated by Dykhoff et al and Tricca reference in view of Landin as set forth in the current Office action as mentioned above in items numbers 4 and 5.

***Contact information***

7. Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to Dhiru Patel whose telephone number is (571) 272 -1983. The examiner can normally be reached on Mondays-Thursdays from 6:30 am to 4:00 pm. The fax number for this Group is 703-872-9306. Any inquiry of a general nature or relating to the status of this application should be directed to the Group receptionist whose telephone number is (571) 272-2800 ext 31.

Dhiru Patel  
Primary Examiner  
Group Art Unit 2831  
May 3, 2004

*Dhiru Patel*  
*Primary Examiner*  
*5/3/04.*